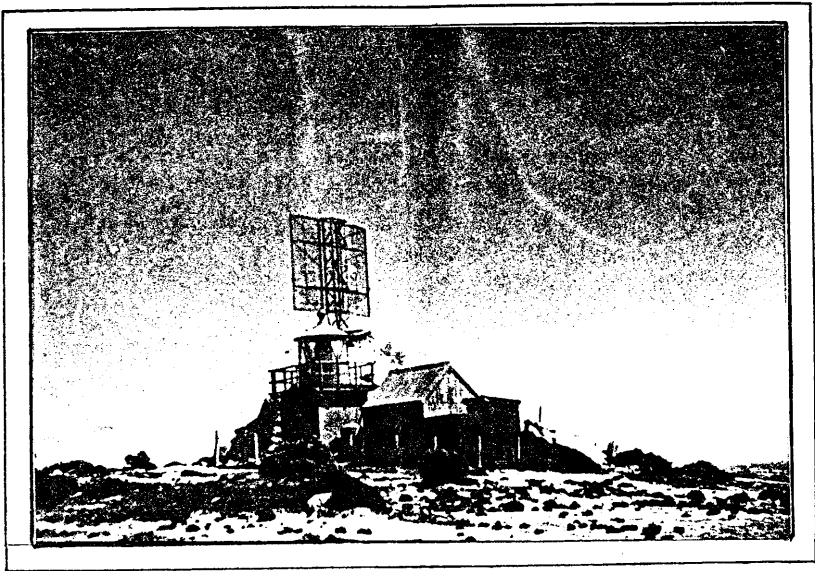


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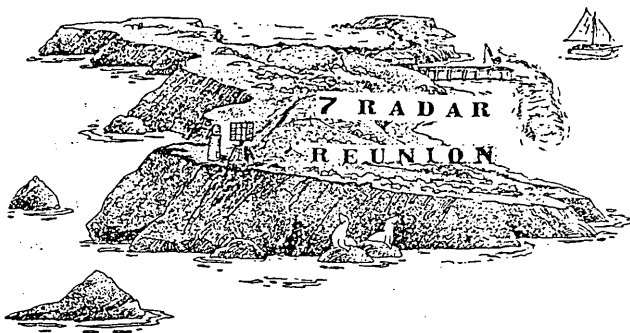
# MEMORIES OF WEDGE,



**7 RADAR.**  
**1943 - 44**

**3rd REUNION 1991**





## "WELCOME"

WELCOME to the 1991 WEDGE RE-UNION . . . . .now a well established, popular and very happy 'Annual Occasion' on our Calendars. And a Special Word of Welcome to all those who have come long distances from the Country or Interstate to be with us on this day - your company is especially appreciated by us all. And we hope this Re-union will live on for a long time in your 'Memories of Wedge.'

Again we must thank Doug Cocks for his efforts to make this year's Re-union "The Best Ever," which I am sure it will be. You will reward Doug, and thank him, by enjoying this get-together, the friendships. and the memories.

My Sincere Good Wishes to You All,  
Jack Measday.

o o o

### A WORD FROM THE REUNION ORGANISER.

My Greetings to the Wedge Boys and their loved ones, and to all those here today who had any involvement with Wedge Island.

Mere words are inadequate to tell you how I feel seeing you again after so many years, and to share again something of our comradeship after so long. And I can assure you that this second time round is all the better and the richer.

And as Jim Fitzpatrick said last year. . ."Reunions are great because they make us all feel like brothers and sisters" . . . and I hope that type of feeling will always remain.

I hope you all enjoy Reunion No. 3, and trust we will all meet again and have many more reunions.

May God's Blessings be with You All,

Doug Cocks,  
14 Canberra Drive,  
ABERFOYLE PARK. 5159.

## THE HISTORY OF SETTLEMENT ON WEDGE ISLAND.

Wedge Island, of some 2000 acres, has experienced at least 130 years of settlement and pastoral use. The largest of the Gambier group, Wedge was taken up as a pastoral property in the mid-nineteenth century. The first recorded lessees were N.J. and J.H. Daw who held Pastoral Lease 701 from 1859 to 1871. By about 1860 they had established a picturesque homestead and garden. Although details of this early farming operation are unknown, it is likely that if sheep were grazed, they were soon replaced by cattle or horses which are more tolerant of the 'coasty' conditions of the island.

By the early 1880's high hopes were held for the pastoral and agricultural success of the island. In 1883, Wedge was surveyed for division into nine sections of between 200-250 acres by the Government Surveyor, Arthur Chamberlain. Although most of these sections were originally taken up by Thomas Cowen, a farmer of Islington, by 1904 they were held by John and William Haigh, stockowners of Port Lincoln, who also held leases for other islands in Spencer Gulf. A guano lease was also issued to William Haigh from 1889 for the taking of guano from coast reserves on several islands in the vicinity of Wedge. The operation was called the Penguin Guano Ltd. This material was probably used for soil improvement on the Wedge property. The Haigh family held Wedge Island until 1909 when the property was in the hands of estate executors, presumably on the death of a family member. As a completion of the Right to Purchase Leases issued earlier for the land, the island was 'freeholded' in 1912. This perhaps indicates the viability of the area for pastoral use compared with other islands which have remained under leasehold tenure.

William Golley was the next owner of Wedge Island. He purchased the property in 1915, although his association with the island possibly preceded his time as manager/owner. Andrew Golley, probably a relative, was involved in the property when it was next sold in 1935. The Golley family also held guano leases for Wedge in the 1920's. As were Thistle and Reevesby Islands, Wedge became well known for breeding horses to be sold in the Indian Army remount trade, and when noted ornithologist Captain White visited the island in 1916, he referred to the Golley brothers who lived there and bred a good stamp of pony. The most common type of horse bred was a cross breed Clydesdale and pony, and horses were kept commercially on the island until the mid 1930's. There are many reminders of this bygone age still evident, such as horsedrawn vehicles, blacksmith equipment and horseyards. Even after sheep were introduced, about twenty horses were retained for use until fairly recent years in rounding up stock and carting hay.

Barley was also commercially grown on Wedge in the early years, with about one third of the island being arable; it is said that the island produced better yields than on the mainland. The grain was bagged and shipped for sale, and the hay cut for stock feed. The barley was winnowed, then bagged and hauled down the northern cliff face to the beach on large slides. The substantial stone shed built in the 1890's on the cliff near the present jetty was a storage shed for hay and grain. It later became a shearing shed.

Although deliberate burning was not carried out to create feed but to control the spread of Coast Daisy-bush (*Olearia axillaris*), in the year following a burn the feed would be good where the weed had once existed. Other weeds are Horehound and Milkweed. Generally however, there are still large areas of relatively natural vegetation on Wedge Island, and pests such as cats, rabbits and foxes are unknown.

When Don Cooper took over the property in the 1930's, there were about 2000 goats on the island. The sale of their hides, bringing about three shillings (30c.) each, was a great bonus for Cooper, funding the cost of the considerable amount of fencing necessary on the sheep property. The last of the goats were removed only about twenty years ago.

64  
continued

In 1935, Wedge Island was purchased by Don Cooper, who as a youth had become captivated with islands on his many excursions sailing single-handed along the South Australian coast. As the market was declining for horses, Cooper decided to take a gamble and try sheep on the island, using the recently developed soil-improvement technology which largely remedied coast disease. This involved drenching sheep every month for copper and cobalt deficiency; and although there was a good success rate, about ten to fifteen per cent of the sheep were still affected, and would run to the edge of the cliff. In fact, so new was the technology at the time that sheep from Wedge Island were the first to be sold at the Adelaide abattoirs which had been successfully treated for coast disease. Thistle Island was also an early property to experiment with the new technology.

Usually Wedge Island ran about one sheep to the acre, or 2000 sheep in a good year, but in a very dry year up to 600 would have to be destroyed so that the limited summer feed would last. Generally cross bred Border Leicester sheep were better adapted to the island conditions than Merino.

A major difficulty was the loading of stock. Although a jetty was constructed on the northern shore when the RAAF Radar came to the island for two years in the 1940's, the transfer of stock onto boats had always taken place from the beach. Cooper can recall that on one occasion the 18 foot dinghy of the vessel loading his stock was in poor condition and sank, taking his rams with it. This left him without rams for some time. Generally the cutter STORM BIRD, skippered by Arnold Mittner, called for the Wedge Island sheep and wool clip, and it was a sight to see the fifteen or so lambs packed in the dinghy sitting on their tails with one on top by which Mittner ingeniously controlled the others. When loading horses, they were generally tied together, swum to the cutter and winched on board. In later years, the lighthouse service vessel YANDRA would call for the stock.

Although the isolation generally did not worry Cooper, ( and on one occasion it was two years before he left the island ) the war years posed considerable difficulty for him. At this time his hard-working Manager Les Rau enlisted for service and Cooper was left to operate the property single handed. It took him three months to blade shear the sheep. It was also up to four months between supply deliveries to the island, although on occasions arrangements would be made for fishermen to deliver more essential items. In fact, the visits of fishermen were a great benefit to the island occupants, offering both company and the means of an occasional trip to the mainland. In later years, pleasure cruisers would also land intermittently on the island in the summer months.

Norm Growden bought the island in 1952 and kept sheep for some years, operating on a similar basis to Don Cooper. Prior to the acquisition of Wedge Island by Venture Corporation Pty. Ltd in 1988, the island had become primarily a tourist destination, and being free of mainland predators, has served as a sanctuary for several endangered species of native animals.

(Slightly adapted from Venture Corporation's history. My thanks to John Culshaw.)

JOHN ALLAN is one of South Australia's most experienced and respected Radar men. John joined the Air Force in 1941, and after completing A&SD and RDF courses, he was attached to No. 6 Squadron for operational experience with ASV, and to Port Kembla for Ground Radar experience. Following the installation of the Air Warning system for Brisbane, he was posted in Aug. 1942 to the Directorate of RDF, Air Force HQ, Melbourne, taking up an appointment in Section RS 1 - Ground Radar. At this time, the RAAF was implementing a massive programme of production and installation of Radar.

In December, 1943, after graduating from the RAAF War Staff College, John was posted as Chief Radar Officer, HQ, First Tactical Air Force, where he remained until September 1945, having attained the rank of Squadron Leader. During this period, 1st. TAF moved after forming at Nadzab, NG, to Labuan Is. Borneo.

Following the decease of the founding unit leader in the late 1950's, John has led the Signals and Radar Unit in the annual Anzac Day March, and with the help of a committee of four, the unit has remained together as an effective group - a highlight being the Annual Reunion.

At present he is State Representative on the planning committee for the 1992 National Radar Reunion at Bendigo to commemorate 50 years of RAAF Radar. He welcomes enquiries.

While stationed at RS 1, Melbourne in 1942, John was given the task of approving the sites for 2 Radar Stations in South Australia - at Wedge Island and Yankalilla. both of which came 'On Air' in 1943.

#### SITING 7 RADAR, 1942.

Following on the almost complete annihilation of the Japanese Task Force by the American Navy at the Battle of Midway in mid 1942, it became clear that the Japanese no longer had the facilities to mount a sea borne air attack against our southern coast line.

The original plan to provide Radar surveillance along the southern coast of this continent was therefore modified to some degree, resulting in the cancellation of Radar installations in South Australia.

Late in 1942, a request from Navy for surveillance to be provided at the entrance to the two gulfs, resulted in the commissioning of No's 7 and 10 Radars. This was done to enhance the safety of the ore loading jetty at Whyalla. All the above occurred before my posting to the Directorate of RDF, Air Force HQ, in August 1942.

I became involved when the Director, RDF, - Wing Commander George Pither, ordered me to visit the proposed sites. This I did circa. December, 1942.

At that time the Dept. of the Interior was responsible for the development of the sites, providing all facilities. I accompanied an officer of the D. of I. to both sites - to Wedge by ketch.

The D. of I. officer stayed at Wedge overnight; I did not. Upon his return to Adelaide some days later, we visited No 10 site.

JOHN ALLAN.

#### Early LW/AW'S.

Early sets used a Kelly and Lewis 2 cylinder air cooled engine as used in the Howard auto cultivator, driving a 2.5 KVA alternator for power. Coupled with the fact that the array was turned manually, one has to remember that this small unit supplied power for the AW gear, and also for lighting the tents.

A modern electric stove and conventional oven consumes much more electricity than an LW/AW station did!

(An extract from Ed. Simmond's Radar History being written for 1992.)

Memories  
of Wedge

Camp Personnel -  
1944 Summer



Xmas Dinner - 1943



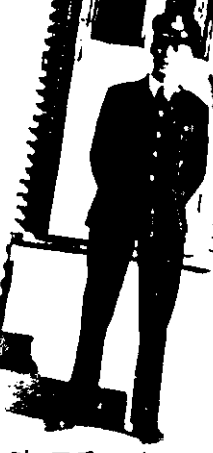
Wedge Cricketers



7 RADAR, 'DOOVER'



Charlie Petersen's  
'TEMPEST'



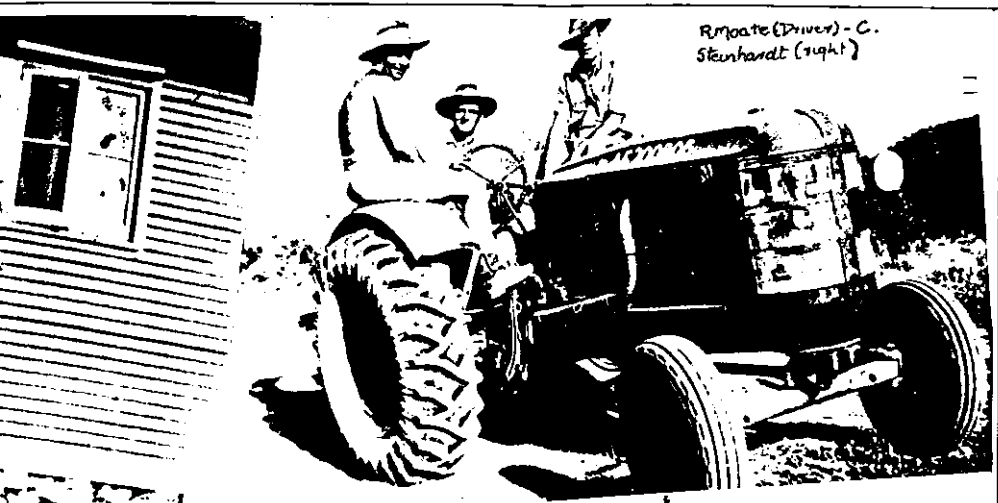
P/O J Measday out  
side the Orderly Room

Memor  
of

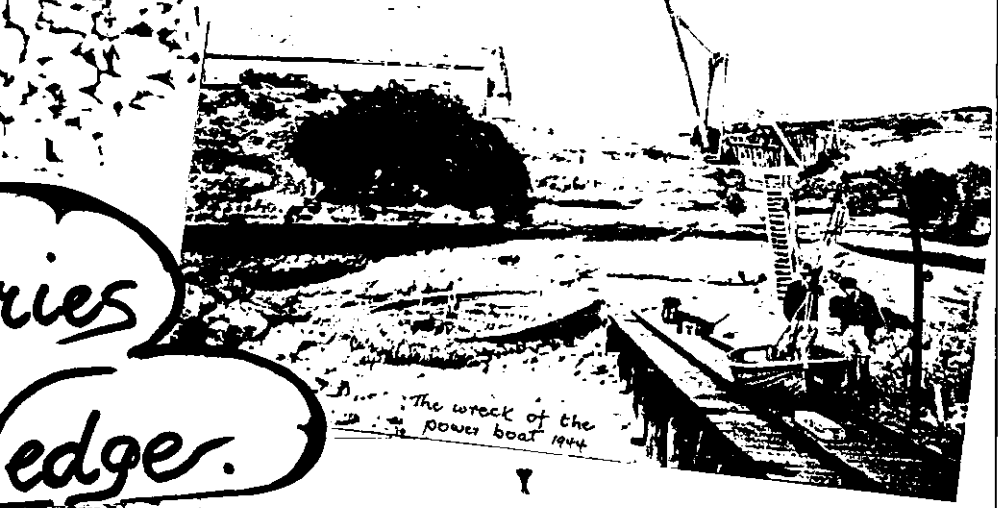


The beauty of  
the island.



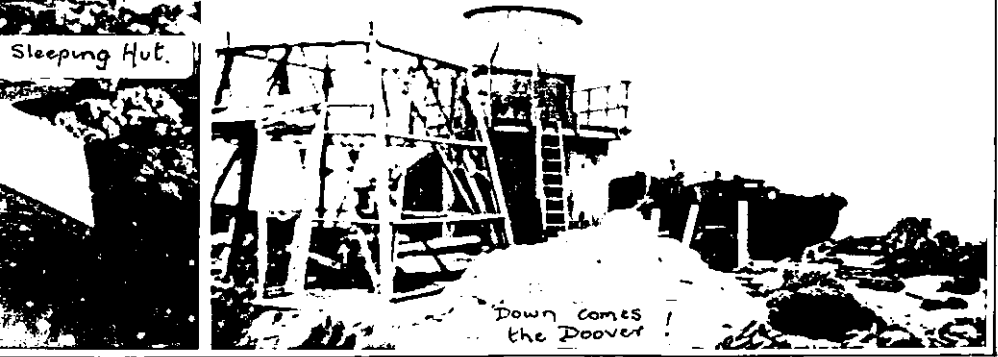


R. Moate (Driver) - C. Steinhardt (right)



ries  
edge.

The wreck of the power boat 1944



Sleeping Hut.

Down comes the Doover

— Memories —  
of  
Wedge..



Young Coates - Jim Abilene  
with large groper.



Wedge's boat -  
at Lincoln -



L-R: Jim Fitzgerald, Stan Moss  
Young Coates, Donnie -  
Colby Hamilton, Perry Mann.

A.W.L. from Wedge.

The station had closed - most of the men had left, and 7 Radar was now in the care of a Sergeant Mechanic and 3 men. There was the daily schedule by W.T.; the gear had to be tested and maintained; and of course there were the daily duties and chores around the camp.

In addition to his W.T. duties and weather reports, Corporal Ingram had learnt to drive the Ferguson tractor. He could start and change-over the big motors, regulate the voltage, do a bit of cleaning and cooking, and generally keep the station going. So when Sgt. Arnold declared his complete confidence in his No. 2 man, and announced his intention of enjoying the bright lights of Port Lincoln for a week, no one felt any great concern. "Sure, we'll be right for a week, Ken, - my turn next week, eh, Ken, eh?" And away Ken sailed into the sunset.

Now with the Dover 'Off Air,' those Ford KVA's were started only when wanted for the tests, for the schedules and at night - so next day at the proper time, Winston climbed up onto his faithful Fergie, and chuffed off towards the motor room up on the hill, his main concern being to crank up the generator ready for the next schedule. And so parking Fergie outside, into the motor room he sallied. All went well - the motor fired and quickly settled down - the voltage was checked - all O.K. No worries! Well, that's what he thought. It wasn't to prove quite that simple.

Outside again, to find his friendly, trusty steed had bolted. Fergie indeed had gone, and at a steady rate of knots, too. There she was in the distance, bouncing from rock to rock, changing direction every now and then, and heading downhill - and in the general direction of those Shark Bay cliffs.

Now like all of us in those days, Winston was neat, nifty and nimble. Far easier to chase Fergie than explain to Southern Command how come he high-dived their tractor over a 500' cliff - so Winston set off to whittle down the handicap, actually catching Fergie in 200 yards flat. But next - how to mount that twisting, frantic bronco. Port side or Starboard? Stab'board it was then!

But Fergie was enjoying her new found feeling of freedom, and in no way was going to be halted. Fergie turned on her master - crushed him to the ground and then trampled on him. And having had her evil way with our hero, Fergie again headed towards Spencer Gulf, no doubt answering a wild mating call from somewhere 'Up North.'

Now having the front wheel of a Ferguson tractor pass over one's midsection would normally slow down the average airman. Not so our intrepid Corporal Ingram! He was made of sterner stuff!

A slow, all-consuming rage overcame his pain and fear. "Maybe I'll die - but I'll master this monster first!"

Up he got - a quick leapfrog, and he was back in the saddle, reined in his steed, and stopped the wild stampede.

Winston walked unsteadily back to the camp. His ribs ached, and his stomach felt as though a rock had dropped on it. He coded and despatched an emergency report - 'Run over by tractor, extent of injuries not known, assistance required - Cpl. Ingram etc. I.C.' Then followed a 'Stand By' and a painful silence from H.Q, before the ether crackled ominously - 'Where is Sgt. Arnold?' Winston's Wedge war wounds were written off, it seemed. So maybe he bnt the truth just a little. Ken couldn't be A.W.L. if he was C.O. So no stripes were lost, no dignity dented even, and H.Q. was pacified. But troops A.W.L. (Away with Welfare in Lincoln) was a big No-No after that!

### TEMPERATURE INVERSION AT WEDGE.

Unusual Radar phenomena did arise during the war years, and one I well remember at Wedge was when an operator picked up a good 'blip' in the St. Vincent Gulf area some 100 odd miles away. It was moving slowly and had the peculiarities of a ship echo. In fact, it was plotted for over 40 miles up the Gulf towards Outer Harbour. To our amazement, identification soon came through from Control . . it was M.V. KARATTA on its way back to Port Adelaide from Kingscote, Kangaroo Island.

'Temperature Inversion' - and the resulting freak plots, came about by a change of temperature over a wide plotting area, so distorting the transmission of radio pulses into a downward pattern. This resulted in plots being picked up at a greater than normal distance.

Harry Radbone.

I was doing a stint on the screen when I picked up an echo from a freighter down in the Southern Ocean at a range of 200 miles . . timing was mid afternoon about October or November 1943 - weather fair. No details of the ship came to hand as far as I know, and we probably just assumed it was a freighter within an area in a shipping lane, bearing S-SW.

Stan Moss.

o o o

### CHAMPION OF THE WOODHEAP.

Wedge, 1944.

Firstly, I should explain I've always been handy with an axe - and in fact I once won a U.S.A. Champion Plumb axe as a trophy in a log chopping competition:

Anyway, one day on Wedge I saw Doug Cocks our cook trying to chop up some wood for his stove. 'Chip up' was nearer the truth, for his axe was crippled; and besides, Doug shouldn't have had to do that job. So I took the axe, a miserable combination of blunt metal and battered handle, and knocked up a heap just for a bit of exercise, really, and also to keep the eye in a bit. Then I chatted Jack Measday, the C.O., and asked him to bring back some decent handles on his next Lincoln trip.

Jack did just that - two good handles, and one extra good genuine American Hickory - a real beauty. So I fitted the first two into the axe heads to use out on the heap, and I fitted the American Hickory into the best axe head, a USA Plumb, sharpened it up, and kept it in the tractor shed just for my own use. When I wanted exercise, I'd get it out and knock up a big heap of wood for Doug.

One day, a W.T. Operator queried me. "I need some exercise" I said. "Good idea. Where's an axe?" "In the cookhouse."

So he grabbed one of the old blunt things, and a quarter of an hour later was hot and bothered, and still trying to split his first bit, while I had filled the old barrow to overflowing.

He stopped for a breather, and looked at my effort, then at his own lack of results. "There's something queer going on here - what's the trick?" "There's four things," I said; "First - I have the best axe. Secondly, I trained as a competition log chopper. Thirdly, I picked a good chopping block. And fourthly, I pick the straight grain logs for splitting, and you picked the curliest, toughest log in the heap." "Can't risk straining my transmitting hand any more mate," and he left me to it.

Maurice Bottrill  
47351 RAAF.



FISH FOR TEA! Ron Robinson, Ken Slip, Vic. Brown, Keith Backshall and Cec. Steinhardt.

#### THE BLUE GROPER'S OF WEDGE.

The 'Blue Gropers,' or *Achoerodus Gouldii* to his friends, is a protected inhabitant of Wedge waters these days, but back in 1943 he was sometimes persuaded to make his contribution to the Wedge War Effort, and became a welcome and tasty variation to the staple Air Force rations which mainly came from tins.

So 'A.G.' was invited to meals as often as he liked to come, and fishing for groper became quite a popular past-time for those with any knowledge at all of the tantalising arts of bait and line.

We discovered that groper fish inhabited the deep pools along the low cliffs and rocks east of the beach on the lee side of the island. This suited us fine - far safer there than risking life and limb down those southern cliffs where the great waves crashed in. Here the swell was quieter, and we were able to tempt the big fellows with a variety of the little delicacies he fancied.

Ron Robinson, Ken Slip, Vic Brown and Cec. Steinhardt often made up a fishing party with me, and with a few rations of bread, cheese and jam maybe from the kitchen, we would set off for a day on the rocks.

Ron Robinson was our expert on catching groper, and would sometimes take off by himself for a few hours session. But I remember when we were with him, he would gidgie a bucket of rock crabs, select a deep hole then burley it with the small crushed crabs. He then used a crab as bait, while we fished the pools using green cord lings or crabs. The large groper did take some muscle work to land, as we usually fished from high up over the pools. I seem to remember quite a few meals of groper at Wedge, which always made a welcome change from the tinned ration variety.

In my mind's eye, I still can visualize the swell moving over those deep pools as the afternoon sun sank, and the tide ebbed.

Keith Backshall  
(Sgt. Op. 1943)

"Here Comes the Boat!"

(Written 1947)

"How far is she now, Mick?"

"'Bout 17 miles."

"How long, you reckon?"

"'Bout 2 hours."

Time slowly goes by with Mick up at the guard box on watch, binoculars glued to his eyes, for the Doover seldom picks up the small boat,- then at last the phone rings again from the lookout . . . "The boat's about a mile and a half out."

In the huts, the magazines and books are pushed to one side. Dearest Mary, Jean or Betty are forgotten and their letters left unfinished. There is a rush down past the Mess to where Leaping Lena, as our old tractor and trailer are affectionately known, is waiting at the ready. She starts promptly and revs up, and with Jack at the helm, off we go down the track to the beach and jetty with a dozen or more off duty airmen hanging on grimly. Now Welfare's boat is clearly visible only half a mile or so off shore.

From the top of the steps we watch as she moves in, gliding through the glassy water on the lee side of the reef, scarcely disturbing the surface. She's a trim craft, practical sturdy lines, graceful even though she's a fishing boat. As she slews round to her anchor, our motor dinghy is lowered, and as many as possible again crowd in for the trip out and back over the reef.

Much activity again as our small open boat once more approaches the jetty. Ropes are thrown and made fast. The motor idles as first, one or two green looking airmen climb out, for it's always choppy out between the islands. Then the mail, two full bags! Now our clerk takes charge as boxes, crates, tins, fresh food, canteen supplies are hoisted up, then carried to the steps and up the cliff to be bundled on the trailer. The trip back is slow, mostly up hill, and as we climb, we see the boat once more moving away from the island, no doubt to start fishing. Back at the camp now, food and stores are packed away, and then we all crowd the Orderly Room for the mail.

The bell clangs for tea, and everyone crowds in to read mail over the mess tables. The usual talk is forgotten for a while and there is quiet as home news is read. The meal over and the mess gear washed, it's back in the huts where the letters are re-read and news exchanged.

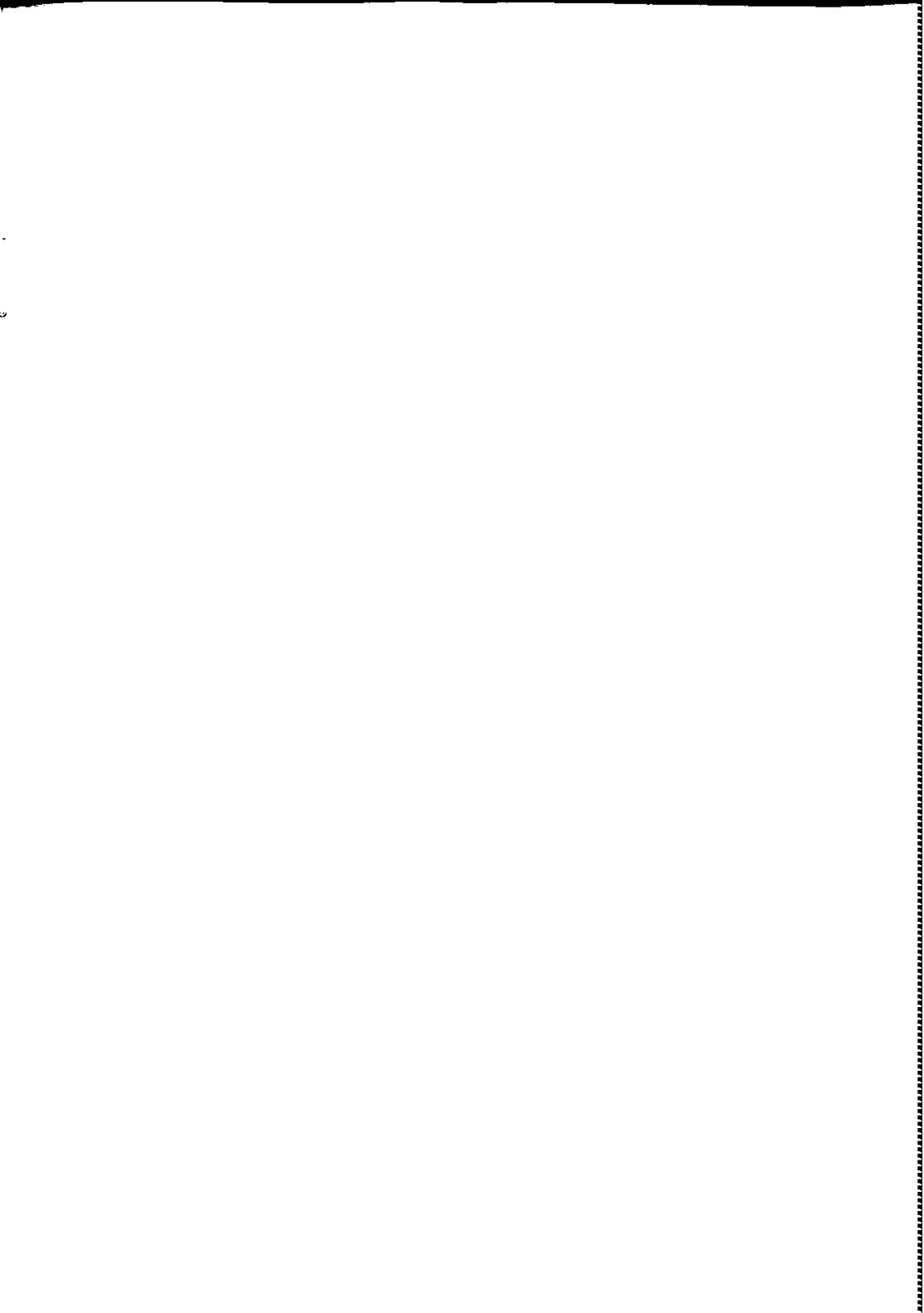
"Let's read the sporting page." "Mumma still loves me." "Only three pages - Gee!"

Each Radar Station had its 'communication link' with the world outside the camp - plane, barge, boat or truck and sometimes very uncertain these were. At Wedge, the link was a small fishing boat, and without her, we would have been completely cut off from the outside world. Or so it seemed. We detested the bad weather when the boat was due, for that meant delays, sometimes for days. No mail. No parcels. No news or fresh food.

A story was told of a chap transferred from Darwin. The trip to Adelaide by Dakota took one day. The trip from Adelaide to Wedge took six days!

MINNIPA and MOONTA were our Adelaide - Lincoln links, and Welfare's boat or Charlie Petersen's 'TEMPEST' were our island links. Most of us at some time parted with our last meal on one of these, and unpleasant the crossing could be. But all was forgotten and forgiven when we heard the cry, "Here comes the Boat!"

Morrie Fenton.



IN THE BEGINNING . . . . "they" created Movement Orders - Meal Warrants - Chits and Leave Passes - those mysterious little bits of paper beloved by the S.P.'s, W.O.D.'s and Duty Sergeants.

And of all these precious, powerful pieces of paper, the Leave Pass was the most prestigious and popular - the most sought after and the most treasured. And remember how it went even better with Mum if there were a few food coupons served up with it

A Leave Pass from Wedge was a Mixed Blessing though, for first it meant the Salt Water Treatment - first by Welfare's boat to Lincoln, then the 'MINNIPA' and the Althorpes before the calmer waters of St. Vincent's Gulf.

A Wedge Island Leave Pass is seldom issued these days, but amazingly one has been treasured and preserved, and has survived the years. With the kind permission of the owner, Jim Walters from Tassie, a copy of this collector's item is now re-printed for your enjoyment:

<u>LEAVE PASS</u>	<u>ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.</u>
Number <i>31457</i> Rank <i>Cpl</i> Name <i>Walters. Jk.</i>	
The above mentioned airman has permission to leave the Camp Area, and proceed to port Lincoln.	
Leave granted from <i>1700</i> hours on <i>11/5/48</i> hours <i>1800</i>	
Date. <i>11/5/48.</i>	<i>[Signature]</i> ..... Officer Commanding, Group 470. R A A F. PORT LINCOLN.

"MEMORIES OF WEDGE." The Photos and Stories.

This year, a photo history has been attempted as the centrefold, and the results achieved have been well worth the effort. Obviously, there were several 'unofficial' cameras on Wedge, and some remarkably good photos suddenly surfaced from underneath the paper in the bottom drawer following the last re-union appeal. All highly irregular 45 years ago, of course, but now we can be grateful that we have such a wonderful Wedge Archives. All the photographs are interesting, whether of the Doover, of groups, the camp or of the jetty.

While the cameras obviously varied a lot in quality, the best 'mix' has been carefully selected to make up a good record of Wedge Air Force life, and to keep a number on hand for a brochure next year. The photos are from Jim Walters, Edna Rau, Keith Backshall, Doug Cocks and others, but particularly we thank Kelvin Scudds for his outstanding photos of the Doover, the cover photo appearing almost like a moonscape. Kelvin thinks his camera in 1945 would have been a Kodak Retina - far better than the then almost universal Box Brownie, and Kelvin obviously had an eye for the best angle. Photographs can be ordered, and a few are on hand today for purchase.

'Memories of Wedge' 1991 has been compiled and printed by M.E.Fenton, of Lockleys, for the Wedge Island 7 Radar Re-union, June 1991.